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THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER



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DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
DOCKETS
99 SEP 24 PM 2:18



September 23, 1999

ORIGINAL

U. S. Department of Transportation Dockets
Docket No. FAA- 1999-600 1-11
400 Seventh Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Gentlemen:

A proposal by the Federal Aviation Administration to shield information collected under the Flight Operations Quality Assurance Program casts a chill on the public's right to know about airline safety.

While the proposal contemplates "limited disclosure of 'de-identified' information" -- information stripped of characteristics that could tie it to a specific airline or airplane -- it appears to provide for this disclosure only under specified circumstances. These include disclosures for purposes of : developing new policies and regulations; evaluating or correcting a condition compromising safety or security; conducting criminal investigations (see description of Section 193.7 (a) and (b) at pp. 40475-40477); and "other circumstances" such as notifying foreign aviation authorities of problems.

The FAA issued a press release saying it would make "information now available to the public" under the FOIA. It left open the question on whether newly gathered information would be subject to disclosure under FOIA.

NASA and federal and state hospital regulators release safety and statistical data to the press and the public -- with names of specific persons redacted. We urge the FAA to do no less.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Bob Dubill".

Robert A. Dubill
Executive Editor